

# [#YALICHAT with Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield](#)

On July 17-18, YALI Network hosted a [Facebook #YALICHAT](#) with Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of African Affairs, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield. Members submitted more than 750 questions and comments on a vast array of topics including the upcoming U.S.-Africa Leadership Summit and specific policy-related issues such as U.S. efforts to support Africa's fight against terrorism, democracy and freedom of expression, youth and women's empowerment, AGOA, and HIV/AIDS.

## **US-Africa Partnership**

*Question:* My name is Laura Golakeh a Washington Fellow at the Arizona State University...What is America's vision for the continent of Africa?

*Answer:* Hi Laura, I hope you are enjoying your time at Arizona State. Let me adjust that question a bit and tell you about America's vision for our partnership with Africa. Our vision is to partner with the people and governments of Africa for freedom, prosperity, and security. We know that Africans are capable of and want to address the challenges facing the continent; some of the other commenters here on the chat have mentioned this already. We believe that the United States is a natural partner for this and we want to support your efforts.

*Question:* Hi Madam Thomas-Greenfield, I am Theophilus Kiah, I, from Liberia;

It's a pleasure to interact with you through this medium.

My question here to you is, having you been an Ambassador to Liberia from 2008-2012 and have a vast experience in the affairs of the Liberian Governance system. What is the major problem(s) the people and Government of Liberia faced and what are some Bilateral Plans of the United States for Liberia?

*Answer:* Thank you Theophilus. Yes, Liberia is a special place for me. I spent time there as a graduate student, long before I was the US Ambassador. Liberia and the United States have a long history of working together. Our objective is not to define the issues the country is facing but to support Liberia's efforts for stability, strong institutions, and economic opportunity for its people. One way we are doing that is through our exchange programs - we have 15 Liberians in the United States on the YALI Washington Fellows program right now. Liberia is also one of our six focus countries of our PowerAfrica initiative, so that is big topic for us.

*Question:* Hello Ambassador Greenfield, why is it taking so long for President Obama to pay a Visit to Nigeria to cement economic ties? (considering Nigeria strategic location as the most populous black nation in sub-Saharan Africa?)

*Answer:* Well, I can't speak for the White House on President Obama's specific travel plans. We work closely with Nigeria in many areas, including in recognition of its role as a regional economic leader. As Assistant Secretary of State, I have been to Nigeria multiple times, as has Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman, Under Secretary Sarah Sewall, and the Counselor of the Department Ambassador Tom Shannon. So, at the highest levels of the U.S. Government, we have an ongoing conversation with Nigeria.

## **US-Africa Leaders Summit**

*Question:* Why is there a US-Africa Summit?

*Answer:* Thanks for asking such an important, straightforward question! The Summit is about reaffirming our long-standing commitment to investing in Africa's development and its people. This is an opportunity to strengthen our partnerships and find additional ways to confront 21st century challenges.

*Question:* Is there any opportunity for Young African leaders to take part on the event? Because I don't fully believe that heads of states represents young leaders.

*Answer:* On Tuesday, I did a Google+ Hangout with Assistant Secretary Evan Ryan on the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs and 4 Washington Fellows. This was a question that Cyrus, a Fellow from Uganda posed as well, so thank you for asking. The Washington Fellows Summit takes place the week prior to the Leaders Summit. Some Fellows will stay on in the United States for a short time and there are events to which they have been invited. Embassies are also involved in working with their Fellows to make that connection between the young people and their leaders. So we expect a lot of that to happen. I've also encouraged all the Fellows to take the initiative to share with their host governments, to write them a letter, to request a meeting, and convey what they have learned. Likewise, we'll encourage the leaders to be open to hearing from the Fellows and from their youth more broadly.

*Question:* Good Afternoon ambassador, I am aware of the US/Africa summit coming soon and as it has been stated it is the the largest ever held with African heads of state and government, my concern is the exclusion of Zimbabwean president, Robert Mugabe from the summit? I believe sidelining Mugabe from the summit is the same as sidelining innocent Zimbabweans who could actually benefit from the summit. How will this exclusion help solve current crisis in Zimbabwe?

*Answer:* President Obama extended invitations to all African heads of state or governments, and the AU Chairperson, except those that are not in good standing with the United States. But I'm glad to have the opportunity to clarify that the United States is proud to engage with the people of Zimbabwe, especially through our Embassy in Harare. We had a tremendous response from young leaders in Zimbabwe to our Washington Fellowship program and currently there are 30 Fellows from Zimbabwe taking part in the program.

*Question:* Which are going to be the key sectors of this ever largest held event/summit between African heads of state and US government under the hosting of the President Obama? #YALICHAT

*Answer:* As you can imagine, this historic summit will cover a lot of topics. The overall theme, however, is "Investing in the Next Generation." This speaks to our common interest in leaving our nations better for future generations. We want to come away from the Summit with concrete gains in peace and security, good governance, and economic development. There is one entire day devoted to U.S.-Africa Business Forum, which will bring together Heads of State with CEOs from both sides of the Atlantic. In addition to the U.S. government hosted events August 4-6, many U.S. organizations from businesses, NGOs, diaspora groups, and think tanks are holding events to take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity to talk about issues that matter to Africans and Americans.

*Question:* Will the current Insurgencies in Nigeria the largest African nation be a part of the discourse? Nigeria has been in the news for the wrong reasons lately...the youths are earnestly looking for a miracle finger. Will it arise from this meeting? Am so bothered Mar.

*Answer:* Let me first say, the United States supports African efforts to improve security at the continental, sub-regional, and national levels. We work in cooperation with our partners across the spectrum of African security institutions including the armed forces, police, other law enforcement agencies, and justice systems. Peace and Regional Stability is key component of the agenda for President Obama and the leaders to discuss. I expect that the situation in Nigeria will be discussed, as it affects not just Nigeria but the whole region of West Africa and the Sahel. So I don't think a miracle solution exists, but what we hope to see is further concrete plans for moving forward.

### **Young African Leadership Initiative**

*Question:* Your Excellency Ambassador Thomas-Greendfield. I would like to commend the US for programmes like YALI. I am in contact with a fellow young Namibian business lady and the experience she is gaining through this programme is priceless and quite an eye opener. I would like to know what the possibilities of maybe extending the YALI programme to have an African-on-site part as well where young business leaders come to Africa to either continue with the leaders that attended the YALI programme in the US or to come to Africa and have the programme running here having a more hands-on and practical involvement in our businesses/institutions/communities. Thank you, Ndapewa Hangula, Windhoek, Namibia.

*Answer:* Thank you Ndapewa. I'm glad you are hearing first hand about the great experience this Washington Fellow is having in the program. I've said it many times, and I'm glad to say it again, the Fellows are extraordinary! Just before coming to do this Facebook chat, I met with a young woman from Namibia who is part of the the group studying at Morgan State University in Baltimore. Was that your friend? We do know there are many other extraordinary young people in Africa who could benefit from additional opportunities. So we are making plans to run this program for five years. Additionally, that's why we have set up the YALI Network to make sure we can sure resources broadly with young people in Africa who are eager to improve their communities, their countries, and the world!

*Question:* ariel from abidjan; HOW can yali promote the activities of his network teams' activities? who to contact for support in each country ? and what is the us government policy in humanitarian and environmental issues ?

*Answer:* Hi Ariel, the best way to stay in touch with the YALI network is by following @YALINetwork on Twitter and Facebook. We also encourage you to stay in contact with the U.S. Embassy in (U.S. Embassy Abidjan), as they are the best source of information on programs and opportunities. Your last question is broad, but I would like to suggest two sources of great information - check out the Bureau of Populations, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) (<http://www.state.gov/j/prm/>) and the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) (<http://www.state.gov/e/oes/>) on the State Department's website. Also, Secretary Kerry just hosted an incredible conference last month called "Our Ocean." It brought together individuals, experts, practitioners, advocates, lawmakers, and the international ocean and foreign policy communities to chart a way forward on protecting and caring for Our Ocean. There are great resources online and through social media to learn more about what is happening on these issues. Thanks!

## **Democracy & Transparency**

*Question:* Hello Ambassador, I'm Sheg from Benin and I'm heavily concerned with the democratic distress in several of our countries where Heads of States behave like kings and spend uncountable public resources to stay in charge, against all constitutional provisions.

What is the position of President Obama's Administration ? How is that question planned to be addressed in August at the Washington Summit?

Is the truth going to be told to them, bare and unveiled?

As the emerging generation, we need to know exactly what we are up to and whom we should expect to deal with as durable partners, both inside and outside.

Thank you for your attention

*Answer:* Sheg, thanks for your question. As President Obama said in Ghana on his first trip to the region, "Africa doesn't need strongmen, it needs strong institutions." Without a doubt, promoting strong democratic institutions is a key policy priority of the United States. It's something that we talk about with our partners in every country on a regular basis. Your point about constitutional provisions is an important one - the U.S. believes that constitutions are designed for the long-term. They shouldn't be used as a tactic to hold on to or consolidate power.

*Question:* In 2015 five countries in West Africa are organizing elections. Recently, a UN representative in the region sounded the alarm about the risk of violence during these elections. This risk becomes even imminent and real as some of the leaders are already using all possible tactics to remain in power. These tactics include fraud, the army, bribery, to list a few. Given that peace and stability in Africa are dear to President Obama, how would the U.S. help these countries to organize free and fair elections, the only guarantee to preventing post-election violence with all the consequences we are accustomed with? How would the U.S. stand with the people in those countries in case they have been robbed of their votes?

*Answer:* I mentioned before some of the ways that the United States is working with our partners to help strengthen democratic organizations. We regularly participate in election monitoring and observing in countries all over the world, including in Africa. Unfortunately, even today, we still see crooked tactics, electoral tampering, vote selling or buying. Or worse, there may be intimidation or violence. That's why we regularly call on all elected leaders and candidates to reject these practices. We tell citizens directly that they can demand better from their politicians and political institutions. There are 11 executive elections on the continent on 2014 and another 12 in 2015. It's critical that every citizen has the opportunity to make his or her voice heard.

*Question:* hello Ambasadaor Linda, I would like to find out from you on what your government is doing to promote democracy and freedom of expression especially in African countries.I say this because, I do not see democracy in play especially when it comes to freedom of expression in my country.Thank you.

*Answer:* Thanks for this great question. You know, there are a lot of things that the United States does to help promote strong democratic institutions and free, fair, and transparent elections. In Mali, we worked w/musicians, DJs, and TV personalities to encourage high youth voter turnout. In Cameroon, we offered a small grant that led to the posting of voter rolls online, creating greater transparency and allowing voters to verify that they were in fact registered. In Madagascar, we provided funds to the Carter Center to observe and help ensure that the first elections since the

2009 coup would be free and fair. Other campaigns helped youth in 25 counties create a plan for how to take action and contact authorities in the case of violence. So those are a few examples.

## **Peace & Security**

*Question:* Your Excellency, waiting for your reaction to my previous inquiry, let me ask an other question. How to restore peace and security in the African Great lakes region without frustrating or hurting any of the local people community? Does US government have a Policy or an advise about?

*Answer:* I'm very glad to answer a question on the topic. At the highest levels of the U.S. government including the Secretary of State, we are committed to helping resolve the humanitarian and security crisis in the DRC and Great Lakes region, including through robust diplomacy and engagement with the key stakeholders in the region. The Sepcretary's Special Envoy Russ Feingold regularly travels to the region and is working on these issues. I would like to invite you to follow Special Envoy Feingold on Twitter @US\_SEGL, so you can get regular update on these efforts.

*Question:* I am a Nigerian, and I am very concerned about our security. So many things happen around here, just that the security issue have a direct vivid impact on our lives. Though we heard that the US at some point volunteered to help before it withdrew. Can I know why that is?

*Answer:* Thank you for your question. I think you may be referring to assistance the United States offered to help efforts to locate the young women and girls from Chibok. We have and continue to provide that assistance on the ground in Nigeria. But the tragic kidnapping of these girls underscores the threat that Boko Haram poses not only to Nigeria, but to the entire region. We are working with our Nigerian partners and neighboring countries to build a lasting approach to combatting Boko Haram. Boko Haram poses a trans-national threat, and our response needs to reflect that. That means stronger protection of the borders, better sharing of intelligence, and a commitment to working together. It also means a comprehensive approach that emphasizes respect for human rights, prioritizes civilian security, and responds to the needs of victimized communities. So, while Nigerians are in the lead, the United States is committed to supporting and have continued to provide important assets and capabilities.

*Question:* Ambassador? I know the US is critically opposed to terrorism the world over. Lately in Africa, we are beginning to experience increasing act of terror being carried out by Al - Shabba and Bokoharam in countries like Kenya, Niger, Somalia and the worst in Nigeria where a number of our continent's future mothers and leaders were seized. Is this issue going to be part of President Obama's agenda item for discussion with African leaders during their ensuing meeting? What is President Obama's position on bringing back our abducted girls?

*Answer:* Certainly terrorism and violent extremism will come up when the Leaders sit down together to discuss Peace and Regional Stability. As President Obama and Secretary Kerry indicated, we are going to work closely with the Government of Nigeria and countries in the region to do everything possible to bring these girls home. We are working with the Nigerian government on both the security side and to address broader issues related to the girls. We have a multi-agency team on the ground including civilians for assistance in negotiations and to help the girls who escaped reintegrate back into their communities.

*Question:* Hello Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield...(Kenya) as matter of employment among

youths, bad leadership and insecurity being among the key problems African nations are facing. is there any plan to help Africa nations to overcome this challenges ?

*Answer:* I think the YALI program and the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit are both part of how the United States is trying to partner with African nations to address these challenges. The theme of the Leaders Summit is Investing in the Next Generation because it encompasses our shared interest in leaving our nations better for future generations. It's true there are many places where you find young people who are uneducated and unemployed, they are not invested in the future of their countries or their communities. Often this is the reason why they are attracted to extremist ideologies and seek a sense of belonging amongst terrorist groups. YALI and the YALI Network aim to provide an opportunities for young people to see the future and their place in it future.

*Question:* Hello Madam Ambassador; Insecurity and in particular religious extremism continues to be a major threat to developing countries' economies, especially at the Eastern, Western, and Northern Africa regions (Al Shabaab, Boko Haram). As a result, travel Advisories have been issued by the State Department. How will the United States continue to balance these competing interests of security towards its citizens, while at the same time, ensuring economic activities continue in the affected countries? Thank you

*Answer:* Thank you for this question. Insecurity and violent extremism is of great concern, and something that is certainly on the agenda for the Summit. As you know from the examples you mentioned, Boko Haram and al-Shabaab terrorist groups are not confined to one country, but cause regional instability. One of the best ways we have to balance these competing priorities is to ensure that we have strong diplomatic presence to engage with the host country government, with its people. We need to have skilled professionals there who understand how to best marshal the resources of the U.S. government in this regard. This is exactly why Secretary Kerry has pressed the U.S. Senate to #ConfirmOurAmbassadors. We have 12 Ambassadors awaiting confirmation - that's nearly 25% of our diplomatic presence in Africa. We need them in the field, doing the jobs for which they trained, eager, and committed.

*Question:* Your Excellency, What is Washington and the Heads of Government in Sub-Sahara Africa doing to effectively tackle terrorism and socio-economic challenges that hinder the development of Africa?

*Answer:* Africa faces significant threat from extremist groups who chose terror as their tactic. These groups exploit socio-economic challenges, as well as local grievances, various ethnic groups, porous borders, and weak institutions. We are seeing increased linkages between violent extremist groups across borders. As a result, our strategy to combat extremism must be increasingly regional and comprehensive. One way we are already doing that in the Sahel is through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership. What is needed is not imposing our own solutions, but rather, building resilience, capacity, and partnerships. So, this is certainly on the agenda for the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit.

## **Trade & AGOA**

*Question:* Madam Secretary, Inter-Africa Trade is one of the key areas that could boost the regions economy as we seek to pull our people out of poverty. We need discussion on regional infrastructure development and establishment of FTAs to remove regulatory and physical barriers. How does this

summit address these issues?

*Answer:* This is an important topic indeed. There will be a great deal of focus on trade and investment in this Summit, including the AGOA Ministerial, the U.S.-Africa Business Forum, and a session on Investing in Africa's Future for the Heads of State. But specifically on your query regarding Inter-Africa trade, I want to highlight the President's TradeAfrica Initiative. Initially, this will focus on the East African Community (EAC) member states of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. TradeAfrica aims to double intra-regional trade in the EAC, increase their exports to the United States, and speed the movement of goods between regional borders. So that is one very tangible way we are working to assist on intra-regional trade issues.

*Question:* Dear Ambassador. I want to ask one question. What is the future of AGOA? Are there any suprices to be expected of other African countries like South Africa to be expelled from this agreement?

*Answer:* AGOA, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, was passed in 2000 and has really had a tremendous impact on trade between the United States and African nations as well as on job creation on the continent. The legislation is set to expire in September 2015. President Obama has made it clear, however, that he seeks a seamless renewal of AGOA, so we are working very closely with our stakeholders, including our Congress to make that happen. Thanks for your question!

## **Energy**

*Question:* Hello Ambassador.I would like to know more about the Electrify Act Africa and what the implementation process would be.

*Answer:* Great question - Energy is a critical issue. That's why President Obama launched the Power Africa initiative last June to double access to power in sub-Saharan Africa! We're starting out in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, & Tanzania, the aim is to increase available electricity by 10K MW and by 20M the number of households and business with reliable access over the next 5 years. The legislation you mentioned, the Electrify Africa Act was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives (one part of our Congress) in May of this year, so it shows interest from the Legislative Branch in seeing Africa develop its electricity infrastructure.

## **Youth Empowerment**

*Question:* Warm regards Linda, the growing number of youth and basically girls within the Sub-Sahara is quite huge; any plan to empower them for the future. If there is, what are the short term and the long term targeted achievement. Pleased to hear. Robert Sam

*Answer:* Youth are certainly the future of this continent. Empowering young people is exactly what YALI is all about and why the Summit's theme is Investing in the Next Generation. Creating a better future for Africa's youth has been a priority for President Obama since the earliest days of his administration and is precisely one of the challenges this Summit seeks to address. No country's resources are infinite, and coordinating multilateral efforts is an ongoing challenge, however the United States committed to seeing African countries use their wealth and resources to create more opportunities for their young population. In our view, this means development strategies focused on education, training, and attracting foreign investment that will create good-paying jobs for young people.

## **Women's Empowerment**

*Question:* Hello Ambassador Thomas- Greenfield. How would you further improve the current position of the promotion of women's rights and their leadership roles in communities in the African continent? At present, a great chasm still exists between reality and policies. The training and empowerment of women is still too few and far between. Please consider your suggestions with cognisance of the cultural and historical differences between the US and sub-Saharan Africa. Thank you.

*Answer:* Education of girls and the economic empowerment of women are critical to the health and success of any society. We know that when women work, they spend more of the income they control on food, healthcare, home improvement, and schooling for their families, which results in better-educated and healthier citizens. It also yields long-term economic growth and greater resiliency in the event of market downturns. One program we have that has seen great success is the African Womens Entrepreneurship Program or AWEPP. The 184 alumnae of the exchange part of this program have created more than 17,000 jobs and established 22 business associations for women across sub-Saharan Africa. So I think our focus is getting support to women who have the drive and the talent to create change. Thanks for your question.

## **Wildlife Trafficking**

*Question:* How is America feels about the abnormal Pouching Scandals in East Africa, particular Tanzania?

*Answer:* Regardless of where it occurs, wildlife trafficking is a complex problem. It is a conservation problem, an economic problem, a public health problem and a security problem. The United States is increasingly concerned by the links of traffickers to transnational organized crime, including terrorist organization. This is big business for these criminal outfits, with annual revenues in the range of \$8-10billion worldwide. President Obama and Secretary Kerry have both spoken out about this issue and planned an event to specifically highlight this issue as part of the Leaders Summit in August.

## **Health**

*Question:* Hello Ambassador Linda Thomas - Greenfield, what policy the US Government is given to African leaders on how to combat the recent outbreak viral diseases called EBOLA in countries like Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. my second question is, how can the US Government assist young African youth to pursue educational training in the US for Africans to impact their communities to grow in various sector.

*Answer:* On your first question, we are closely monitoring the recent outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa. I want to extend my sympathies to the families and loved ones of those who have died. We are all thinking about and praying for those fighting the virus. As we have been since the outbreak began, the U.S. will continue to provide a comprehensive, multi-agency response to assist those countries affected. Multiple U.S. government agencies are contributing to the outbreak response efforts including CDC, Dept of Health and Human Services, Defense Dept, State, USAID. The U.S. missions in the affected countries are closely monitoring the situation and continue to keep American citizens informed. Neither the United States nor the WHO recommends general travel restrictions or screening at points of entry at this time. On your second question, this is precisely what the YALI program is all about - helping young African leaders gain the skills and training they



need to make an impact in their communities. You are already part of that by joining the YALINetwork!

### **HIV/AIDS**

*Question:* hello ambassador am Paul from Kenya i would like to know the policies kept in place to make sure the global HIV & AIDS kitty is well sustained. We are still struggling with pandemic here in Africa, we would like to see more engagement put in place to make sure we have reached a level of zero new infection and adequate provision of ART and food supplements to the already infected. Thanks in advance.

*Answer:* Thanks Paul. The PEPFAR program has had tremendous results, delivering on the President's 2011 World AIDS day treatment and prevention targets – including treatment for 6.7M people. The U.S. also hosted a successful replenishment for the Global Fund for AIDS, TB, and Malaria which raised over \$12B for the fight. But as the UNAIDS Gap Report released last week shows, Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for almost 70% of the global total of new HIV infections. So, we agree, it's important to keep these resources sustained.

### **LGBT**

*Question:* Your Excellency, as you might be aware 40 of 52 African countries have anti – gay laws. On the contrary U.S.A are the chief frontier of gay rights world wide. This conflict in ideology has set many African countries on a collision path with U.S.A as reflected especially in AID cuts and travel sanctions on some African government officials. Doesn't this kind of action undermine the sovereignty of African countries and a clear reflection of neo – colonialism by the U.S? Akampurira Justus Harris -Uganda

*Answer:* Thanks for this important question. Human Rights and fundamental freedoms belong to all individuals wherever they live. LGBT rights are human rights – and human rights are a priority for the United States in every country around the world, not just in Africa. We believe that all people are created equal & should be able to live free from discrimination.. I understand that it's a sensitive topic and that change won't come overnight. It didn't come overnight in the US either. But in order to move toward progress, toward inclusion for all, we must have honest discussions, we must talk about fears and concerns, even if those conversations are difficult.

### **Sign-off message**

*U.S. Department of State: Bureau of African Affairs:* Thank you all for your questions and comments. I wish I could have answered more of your questions, but I hope to do another QandA again soon. Please do continue to engage with the @YALINetwork. If you don't already, please follow me on Twitter @StateAfrica. Thank you and Best Wishes! – LTG

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## **Capturing the YALI Network in Action**

Every day, you share great stories of your leadership – how you’re increasing women’s access to education, improving healthcare in your community, protecting our environment – the list goes on. Now it’s time to SHOW us your stories.

Submit a photograph that shows how you are building a brighter future for Africa. Photographs can illustrate anything from you working on a startup idea with fellow leaders to you reading with children at a local NGO. (Here’s a tip: photographs should be high quality, preferably 2-3 MB in size.)

We will use your photographs to illustrate the passion, dedication and hard work of young African leaders at the upcoming U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit. It’s just another way the YALI Network is connecting you with other young African leaders and the United States.

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## **Environment**

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